

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BELIZE 0238

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR BH

SUBJECT: HYPOTHESIS OF A BELIZEAN BID FOR DEFENSE GUARANTEE BY
CUBA

REF: A) GOWEN-GAWF TELECON MARCH 16

B) MY OFFICIAL-INFORMAL TO WEISSMAN OF MARCH 5

C) 76 BELIZE 0237

D) 76 BELIZE 0236

1. PURPOSE OF THIS CABLE IS TO FLAG FOR THE ATTENTION OF THOSE WHO WILL SHORTLY BE CONSIDERING BELIZE FY 1977/78 CASP SUBMISSION NOW ENROUTE TO DEPARTMENT THE POSSIBILITY THAT GOB MIGHT BECOME SUFFICIENTLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE SLOW (OR NONEXISTENT) PROGRESS BEING MADE TOWARD INDEPENDENCE TO TURN TO CUBA FOR A DEFENSE GUARANTEE OF SOME SORT THAT WOULD ALLOW BELIZE TO MOVE FORWARD TO INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT FIRST REACHING A SETTLEMENT WITH GUATEMALA IN REGARD TO THE LATTER'S CLAIM TO SUZEREIGNTY OVER BELIZE.

2. I WISH TO MAKE IT CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET THAT THIS IS ONLY A HYPOTHESIS, UNSUBSTANTIATED AS YET, BUT, IN MY OPINION NOT TOTALLY LACKING IN CREDIBILITY.

3. CONSIDERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF HYPOTHESIS:

A) PROBING BY SHOMAN. IN COURSE OF JANUARY 30 MEETING WEISSMAN AND I HAD WITH PREMIER PRICE AND CABINET, ATTORNEY GENERAL ASSAD SHOMAN WHOM PRICE TOLD US HE HAD UNOFFICIALLY DESIGNATED HIS PRIN-

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CIPAL ADVISER ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INQUIRED WHETHER, IN THE EVENT

IT PROVED IMPOSSIBLE TO RESOLVE THE UK-BELIZE DISPUTE IN A MANNER THAT WOULD ELIMINATE THE GUATEMALAN THREAT TO BELIZE, THE UNITED STATES WOULD OBJECT TO THE BELIZEANS SEEKING THEIR OWN POST-INDEPENDENCE DEFENSE GUARANTEE FROM WHEREVER THEY MIGHT GET ONE. IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE CONTEXT HE WAS REFERRING TO CUBA.

B) VIEWS OF DEPUTY PREMIER ROGERS. DURING THE SAME MEETING IN CONTEXT OF SPECULATING ON WHAT EFFECT CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA MIGHT HAVE ON GUATEMALAN POLICY TOWARD BELIZE, DEPUTY PREMIER ROGERS SAID THAT IF GOG WERE TRULY CONCERNED OVER POSSIBILITY OF ANGOLA-STYLE CUBAN INTERVENTION IN BELIZE, IT WOULD BEHOOVE THE GOG TO FACILITATE RATHER THAN OBSTRUCT BELIZEAN INDEPENDENCE BECAUSE ONLY GUATEMALA'S CONTINUED OBSTRUCTION OF BELIZE'S ASPIRATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE WOULD LEAD GOB TO TURN TO CUBA FOR A DEFENSE GUARANTEE.

C) ALLEGATIONS OF OPPOSITION. OPPOSITION POLITICIANS PRO-FESS TO REGARD IT AS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT PRICE GOVERNMENT IS MOVING TOWARD SOME KIND OF SECURITY AGREEMENT WITH CUBA. (SEE REFS C AND K)

D) POSSIBLE CUBAN INTEREST IN INVOLVEMENT IN BELIZE DISPUTE. THE ARGUMENT THAT THE CASTRO REGIME MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN INTERVENING IN BELIZE TO EVEN AN OLD SCORE WITH GUATEMALA FOR LATTER'S ROLE IN BAY OF PIGS EPISODE WOULD AT LEASE SEEM TO MERIT CAREFUL APPRAISAL AS WOULD PREMISE THAT CASTRO REGIME, IN WAKE OF ITS SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA, MIGHT BE IN A MOOD FOR FURTHER FOREIGN MILITARY ADVENTURES.

E) DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. FAILURE OF UPCOMING TALKS TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING PRICE CAN LABEL PROGRESS WILL PUT PRESSURE ON HIM TO SEEK A NEW AVENUE DOWN WHICH TO PURSUE INDEPENDENCE.

F) POLITICAL LEANINGS OF PRICE AND SHOMAN. THERE IS LITTLE IN THE POLITICAL RECORD OF EITHER PRICE OR SHOMAN TO INDICATE THAT EITHER THE PREMIER OR HIS POLITICAL ADVISER WOULD HESITATE TO ACCEPT CUBAN ASSISTANCE IF THEY BELIEVED IT WOULD FURTHER THEIR CAUSE. PRICE IS IDEOLOGICALLY CLOSE TO BURNHAM IN GUAYANA
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AND MANLEY IN JAMAICA. SHOMAN IS REPORTED TO HAVE A LIFE SIZE PICTURE OF CHE GUEVARA IN HIS LIVING ROOM.

G) COULD PRICE BE COOKING SOMETHING CUBAN IN THE BACK ROOM? THE PREMIER IS SHREWD ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT ANY TANGIBLE EVIDENCE THAT HE WERE CONTEMPLATING AN APPROACH TO CUBA WOULD DOOM ANY CHANCE OF REACHING AGREEMENT WITH GUATEMALA AND WOULD ALIGN THE U.S. AGAINST HIM. HENCE, IF ANY CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO

A CUBAN CONNECTION, IT WOULD BE VERY CLOSELY HELD. THIS MIGHT EXPLAIN ABSENCE OF ANY CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF ANY GOB DEALINGS WITH THE CUBANS.

4. CONSIDERATIONS CASTING DOUBT ON HYPOTHESIS.

A) BRITISH WOULD NEVER GO ALONG. THE UK STILL HAS PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR BELIZE'S FOREIGN POLICY. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE PRICE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A DEAL WITH CUBA OVER THE OPPOSITION (WHICH I THINK WE CAN COUNT ON) OF HMG.

B) OPPOSITION FUROR. PRICE'S POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND THE BELIZEAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY WOULD BE OUTRAGED BY ANY DEALINGS WITH CUBA AND WOULD EXERT STRONG EFFORTS TO DERAIL ANY AGREEMENT REACHED. THE RESULTING UPROAR COULD COST PRICE HIS JOB.

C) ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE. THE GOB IS ORDINARILY NOT VERY GOOD AT KEEPING SECRETS. IF A DEAL WITH CUBA WERE UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE SOME EVIDENCE OF THIS WOULD NOT HAVE LEAKED BY NOW.

5. CONCLUSIONS.

A) SOME BELIZEANS WANT A DEAL WITH CUBA. I THINK THERE IS A GENUINE PREDISPOSITION ON THE PART OF SOME IN THE PRICE GOVERNMENT TO BEGIN THINKING ABOUT SEEKING A DEFENSE GUARANTEE FROM CUBA.

B) SOME ARE BLUFFING. I ALSO THINK ALL THE PRINCIPAL FIGURES IN THE GOB SEE POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES TO BE GAINED BY ENCOURAGING THE US AND OTHERS TO BELIEVE THAT A DEAL WITH CUBA IS MORE LIKELY THAN IT ACTUALLY IS.

C) CONTINUED FRUSTRATION FAVORS CUBA CONNECTION. PUBLIC OPINION
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HAS NOT BEEN ADEQUATELY PREPARED TO WELCOME A TURN TOWARD CUBA. CONTINUED FAILURE TO REACH A SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE COULD BE USED BY PRICE TO CHANGE THE CURRENT CLIMATE, BUT THIS WOULD TAKE TIME.

D) SUMMING UP: HEAP BIG SMOKE BUT NO FIRE.
GAWF

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